Vol. X, No. 9 HUMAN EVENTS March 4, 1953

THE PROBLEM OF GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA

By JUNIUS B. WOOD

MAR 13 '53

THE ELITE of the government's typewriter cowboys have dismounted. The daily torrent of press releases has diminished to a trickle. With public attention focused on a war that is not a war, lagging European allies, taxes, price controls and other weighty phenomena of the January change in administration, the sudden seclusion of the galloping herd which roamed the range for 20 years has not received the attention it deserves.

Editors and others on the free mailing lists know that missiles from Washington are fewer, and collectors of waste paper carry away lighter loads. One recipient of this government bounty reported, last year, that 2,226 postage-free pieces of government mail were received in two days. When this is multiplied by thousands of offices over the country, the present letup in government press releases and propaganda assumes the importance of a national event.

The relief may be as temporary as a summer in Kansas without grasshoppers. Or, the former daily deluge of government press releases may come under the heading "Time for a Change" and never resume. If so, that would be more than various Congressional investigations of excessive and expensive government publicity have accomplished

Senator Harry F. Byrd, when Chairman of the Joint Committee on Reduction of Nonessential Federal Expenditures, reported 121 top experts distributing government information, publicity and propaganda; but including the assistants listed by the Civil Service Commission, the number is boosted to 4,000. A House committee, of which Representative Clare E. Hoffman is now Chairman, spread even wider and found 42,000 employees costing the country $74,800,000 a year.

Keeping the public informed on national affairs is a duty of free government. To do that, publicity bureaus are necessary. The puzzle which the great brains in and out of Congress have not been able to solve is where to draw a dividing line between such legitimate information and the propaganda for pet projects, plugs for political party programs or "My Day" trivia about the uneventful doings of an official who rates the services of a public relations expert. The immediate question, however, is whether today's crop failure in press releases is a permanent policy of a new administration or is merely the lull before another deluge.

Copyright 1953 by HUMAN EVENTS, INC.
Published weekly at 1835 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS men are not going to prolong their sit-down or the new boss may discover that he gets along quite well without them. They are capable professionals, most of them in the $10,000 a year level or better. Such jobs are not relinquished without a fight.

The press officer is now sitting tight because he is not sure what information should be made public. Nor is the new chief too sure. If the latter came from a corporation, he was accustomed to answering the stockholders only at annual meetings. As a government official, the people ask him questions every day. Worse than that, they talk back. In the corporation, the directors backed him up. In government, a goodly share of the directors, Congressmen, are waiting to heckle him at the first opportunity.

The new official realizes that a government job has perquisites. Not the least is a public relations man and a staff for official or personal use. They become his first line of defense. The expert in publicity can write a speech for him, arrange conferences and turn out a press release every hour on the hour. Releases have a favorite form. The name of the department or agency chief usually is in the first paragraph — what he "said", "did", "announced" or "decided" that day.

In addition to not knowing their new boss's tastes, the public relations men have their own haunted sepulchers. For years they have sung the praises of a Brannan Farm Plan, Ewing socialized medicine, RFC, reclamation, public housing and other plain and fancy projects and 'isms. In many cases they did the thinking for their advertised bosses.

The voters repudiated these plans. The public relations man must recant (sounds like Moscow), tell the public that what he was diligently advocating only a few weeks ago is now bad for the country. Small wonder the "typewriter cowboys" are hiding in the haymow and hoping that lightning will not strike.

THE BUSINESS OF THIS army of public relations men is to inform the public about government activities. They are the sources to which a newspaper or any citizen can go for information. They fulfill that function cheerfully and well. Instances are rare where a government information officer misleads or misinforms an inquirer. When he does, he probably is obeying orders of his boss.

The abuse of that function comes when the public relations man expands his activities into selling the public a bill of goods. Instead of limiting his efforts to telling the public what the government is doing under laws enacted by Congress, he is shoved into the more exciting crusade of telling the public what the government might do for them if Congress would only pass a certain law.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The government public relations man thus becomes a paid propagandist to sway public opinion — a novel situation where the taxpayer is forced to pay for his own conversion. Lobbying is joined to propaganda, making life unpleasant or impossible for any Congressman who opposes the crusade.

Nor is the day's good deed forgotten. The public must be assured that his boss, a hero with his eyes on a star, is the indispensable man who will lead the nation into an Eden of ease and prosperity — "Remember him at the next election".

Also comes a day — many days — when a pompous official sees a newspaper or magazine story that steps on his bunions. It is *lese majesté*. If this were an Iron Curtain country, he'd have the reporter shot before sunset. He rings for his public relations chief. That factotum should keep such miscreants in line. He's fallen down on the job and the big boss takes over. He orders: "Write a stiff letter to that fellow's editor and get him fired. I'll sign it."

The public relations man writes the letter. When the editor receives it he calls for the reporter. "Look at this", he gushes, "on a government letterhead and signed by a big chief. That story got under the hide of another stuffed shirt. Good work. Take a day off." Officials never learn.

This selling the public a bill of goods went over big for 20 years. Last November, the voters stopped buying. The salesmen and merchants — such typewriter cowboys and rodeo promoters as survive — must get acquainted with a new stock.

Section 201, Title 18, of the United States code makes it unlawful to use federal funds to influence legislation before Congress. This is to prevent the Executive branch of the government from dominating the Legislative branch. The law might work if a public relations man started shooting Congressmen who do not support his proposal and putting cash on the barrelhead for those who do support it. Neither method would be exactly popular. As to preventing an agency with a public relations staff from using government employees, resources and materials to influence legislation, the law is little more than a pretty gesture.

Commenting on this, a House committee reported that the administrative agencies of government have "the greatest and most effective lobby in the nation". "We're telling our story to the people", the agencies reply. "The opposition is free to give its side. The public gets a balanced education."

If the other side is big and rich enough, it can get its story to the people. If they are little fellows and unorganized, they can't afford it. The taxpayer foots the bills, coming

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and going. His taxes pay for government propaganda and lobbying. The business forced to defend its interests charges off the cost as an operating expense. It gets a tax reduction and the public pays that much more.

Congressional committees have reported instances where the Executive branch of the government campaigns against a Congressman in his own district. On one issue, department field workers were ordered to call citizens' meetings and line up voters against Congressmen who opposed that department's pet project. This went so far beyond the usual blanketing of a District with propaganda literature that the Attorney General was asked to take action. Nothing was done.

AS THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH of the government, and keeper of the purse, Congress is able to defend its rights. The public has difficulty in separating information about what the government is actually doing from propaganda for a fad or fancy that some official wants the government to adopt.

One suggestion is that Congress fix a dividing line between information and propaganda. Telling the public what the government is doing under laws enacted by Congress would be information. Publicizing a proposed program not yet authorized by Congress would be propaganda.

Under this interpretation, if an official travels around the country making speeches or if his public relations bureau grinds out boosts for the proposal, the expenses should not be paid by the government but by his political party. The discrimination is not as easy as it sounds. The party has endorsed the proposal, the voters have given the party a mandate to carry it out and its officials are in office. "The Executive branch has been elected to do the job, why wait for Congress to act?"

Another suggestion is based on the pleasant fallacy that when an official is elected, he ceases to be a party man and is transformed into a representative of all the people. As the latter, he should publicize arguments on both sides of a proposal.

Congressional hearings have shown that the administration in office invariably presents only its side of the argument. That often is as highly colored as a recent release solemnly asserting that Grand Coulee Dam won the latest war.

The people have elected a Congress to argue and decide. Having chosen these representatives, at least for two years, the taxpayers should not be forced to continue paying for unending arguments. Let Congress hear them — and do something.

Junius B. Wood is a free lance writer in Washington and has previously contributed to HUMAN EVENTS.

ADDITIONAL COPIES: One—$.20; six—1.00; ten—1.50; fifty—5.50; one hundred—10.00. Quotations for larger quantities on request.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HUMAN EVENTS

FRANK C. HANIGHEN, *Editor* FRANK CHODOROV, *Associate Editor*

Volume X, No. 9 Wednesday, March 4, 1953 Washington, D. C.

MINNESOTA MAR 7 '53

The News from Moscow: Stalin, according to this morning's dispatches, has suffered a fatal paralysis. America, judging by the press reports, seems to suffer from a mild neurosis. The problem is anxiously scrutinized in terms of "What will Russia do now?" and "Will this mean peace or war?". Yet, in the first batch of reactions as reported in the press, no public figure suggested that our fate rests on ourselves — not on the happenings in the Kremlin.

President Eisenhower's statement was shrewd, human, spiritual — and most dignified. We might well ponder the less dignified deportment of Prime Minister Churchill. Almost immediately, the British leader sent his secretary to the Soviet Embassy in London to "offer his sympathy". Diplomats here read significance into the promptitute of his gesture. The British Prime Minister has shown recent signs that he would like to curry favor with Moscow — as pointed out in our article last week, "Atlantic Disunion", by Freda Utley. It is recalled that Churchill once before on a fateful occasion rushed into a highly expensive gesture: after Hitler invaded Russia in 1941, Churchill hastily offered Stalin an alliance and promise of aid, and Roosevelt chimed in — a blank-check operation which has cost us dearly.

Perhaps Britain is so weak its future must depend on the will of foreign chancelleries. As for America — it seems high time to emphasize our strength, to assert our will and ability to protect our own national interests, regardless of what our enemies or so-called friends may say or do.

State Department Story: The fight waged during the past week by Senator McCarthy, which has been approaching a climax in the past twenty-four hours, looms as the most important conflict since Eisenhower was inaugurated.

It sharply outlines the great issue of the Eisenhower Administration — can that regime free itself from the fetters of the "holdover" bureaucracy formed by Truman and Roosevelt?

When McCarthy commenced his probe of the State Department a fortnight ago, Secretary Dulles and Mr. Donald Lourie, his undersecretary for "hire and fire", had been virtually "surrounded" by the old Acheson crowd. Dulles and Lourie had to rely on these people, although apparently they both soon came to realize that "something was wrong" and welcomed McCarthy's intervention. The entrenched New Deal bureaucrats do not give up without a struggle. And so — while Dulles and Lourie announced a new policy, the "holdovers" from the Truman Administration worked busily to sabotage it.

[Those who know Washington realize full well the power of the bureaucracy to influence and shape the policies of the men at the top of the Departments. By giving their "bosses" only partial information, by sending "upstairs" slanted reports and recommendations, the anonymous bureaucrats effectively create policy — almost without top officials becoming aware of it. This process even includes the collaboration of receptionists, telephone operators, secretaries to the secretary, etc. — so that phone calls or letters to the "surrounded" top officials are shunted to certain subordinates who "bury" the communications if these seem to interfere with the bureaucrats' designs. We happen to know of one letter from Senator Taft to Undersecretary Lourie which suffered this fate.]

McCarthy has been able to breach the walls because he now possesses power which he did not formerly enjoy. He has the power to subpoena and he now has established communications with loyal employees in the Department, hitherto cowed by the ruling Acheson clique. As a result, within one week, he forced the State Department to back down before his will on three different occasions.

Published weekly at 1835 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.
Copyright 1953 by HUMAN EVENTS, INC.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the reigning bureaucracy reformed its ranks. From our own sources within the Department we learn that the Acheson crowd held a "strategy conference" behind closed doors, after which the bureaucrats boasted that a "counterattack" would be mounted against McCarthy. It was. Last week the counterattack appeared, obligingly assisted by certain members of the press who work with the bureaucrats — all about the alleged lowering of the State Department "morale" as a result of the McCarthy "inquisition". The whole Department was pictured as "paralyzed" and unable to perform routine duties because of the probe. The actual situation was that only the "holdover" network was demoralized; the rest of the bureaucrats (whom McCarthy describes as the "Americans") were delighted.

McCarthy got some of the "Americans" on the stand and they bore witness to the waste and left-wing manipulation that went on. A new counterattack was then launched (again by obliging scribes) against what were termed "disgruntled employees", that is — the "Americans". And the propaganda emphasized that Dulles would have to learn how to "get along with" the reigning bureaucracy.

The top level now fired back. Dulles endorsed McCarthy's efforts publicly. Lourie appointed Scott McLeod, former FBI agent, as new head of the State Department security division — a selection praised by McCarthy. The Wisconsin Senator continued his exposé; he showed how the State Department's Voice of America outfit had censored broadcasts to Israel about Soviet anti-semitism. As we go to press, he has revealed the record of Reed Harris, State Department acting administrator for overseas propaganda.

With what effect? McCarthy's discoveries about the Voice of America have prompted Republican leaders on Capitol Hill to consider withholding all appropriations from this propaganda agency until an entirely new team, from top to bottom, is put in to run it.

What will McCarthy do next? The finger is pointed at a State Department subdivision called the Office of Intelligence Research. This mysterious group, staffed heavily with Eastern Europeans ("not an American accent in the whole shop" is a frequent comment) has incurred the distrust of our "hush-hush" services.

The battle under way between New Deal bureaucrats on the one hand, and the new Secretaries aided by Congress on the other, emerges as the crucial contest of today — in the opinion of Congressional leaders. McCarthy is waging a fight not only for the freedom of Dulles to run his own department, but also for the freedom of other members of the Eisenhower cabinet — Benson in Agriculture, Weeks in Commerce, McKay in Interior, etc. — wherever the top appointees of the Eisenhower regime find their way blocked by "holdovers".

Finally it is the considered opinion of many Republicans on the Hill that the balancing of the budget and the reduction of the swollen governmental establishment depend on the outcome of this "secret war", the decisive nature of which is only inadequately conveyed in the headlines.

Yalta: As we go to press, the GOP majority on the Hill is attempting to amend the Eisenhower-Dulles statement condemning Russia for perverting the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam pacts. This literary effort would at least prevent the proposed resolution from constituting an endorsement of the generally unpopular agreements which the Eisenhower-Dulles text initially appeared to be. Meanwhile, observers speculate as to why this extraordinary legislative tangle was ever allowed to take place.

One rumor — pondered on Capitol Hill — has it that members of the Supreme Court advised the White House to send their resolution in this form to the Congress. Legislators wonder if the Justices offering this counsel were Frankfurter and Vinson. On the other hand, other well-informed people believe the cause of the trouble came from "holdovers" of the Acheson group in the State Department.

In any case, the situation is veritably a mess: it has offended minority groups in the United States and, even if satisfactorily phrased and passed, it will — after all the delay and discussion — lose its

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impact abroad as a move in psychological warfare. Certain distinguished retired diplomats here wonder why the question was ever sent to Congress. Why — they ask — did not the Executive, via the State Department, simply embody the sense of the resolution in a note and send it to the UN?

Labor Front: The conservative prevailing wind in the country has begun to affect the labor union field — particularly since the recent death of Allan Haywood, Executive Vice President of the CIO. Haywood served not only as a check against the left-wing headed by Reuther, but also as a man who could keep the contending elements of the CIO together.

It is well known that the Steelworkers Union is opposed to Reuther and has had a flirtation with the American Federation of Labor. Until now, this flirtation has not gone far. But the removal of Haywood could open the way to more serious consideration of plans for the Steelworkers to leave the CIO and to join the more conservative federation. It is noteworthy that the steel union would not have much difficulty in arranging matters with the AFL, for there are no frictions of a jurisdictional character. If the Steelworkers should leave the CIO, it might prove a heavy and perhaps fatal blow to the latter. The situation, from now until the selection of Haywood's successor (now scheduled for next fall), will bear watching, according to labor observers in Washington.

La Follette: The unfortunate suicide of former Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr. last week inspired many tributes, many interpretations of his career. Some commentators compared him unfavorably to his famous father — unfairly we think. As it appears to us, "Young Bob" ran head into the world crisis when that crisis had reached a stage immensely more difficult to meet than when the elder La Follette was alive. Possessed of a luminous intelligence but a frail physique, young Bob went under. Yet, despite his personal tragedy, we believe that the younger La Follette "came through".

As a patriotic American and a leader in the America First movement, the Wisconsin Senator came to see the dangers of statism and the Machiavellian utilization of social welfare as well as of international idealism. From many conversations with him, we had personal knowledge of this. His rallying to the side of American nationalism is well known. Less known was his education, albeit late, in the peril of Federal economic controls. We recall vividly his outraged comments about the damage wrought by the bureaucracy in 1945-6 not only to Wisconsin business firms, but to business in general. Although he kept out of politics after his defeat for re-election in 1946, Bob La Follette really ended in Bob Taft's corner.

Book Front: In the book-selling trade, one recent event has aroused much discussion and comment. On February 1, the book review sections of the *New York Times* and New York *Herald Tribune* ran front page reviews of an official biography of Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, *Tito,* by Vladimir Dedijer (Simon and Schuster). The author of the book is an employee of Tito; it is extremely laudatory. So are the reviews, one of them written by the head of the *New York Times* European staff, Mr. Cyrus Sulzberger. In short, the two papers literally — as the phrase goes — rolled out the carpet.

Yet, Marshal Tito is hardly a palatable figure in any sense of the word, and the charge of his critics that he is a bloody dictator and a National Communist, seems on the record to be quite exact. Tito, true, is now anti-Stalinist and is seeking American aid to line up his rather questionable military power against the Stalin-dominated combination. But, nowhere in these two papers is there a hint that his dictatorial, socialist regime constitutes a liability rather than an asset on the side of the free nations confronting the Kremlin.

This book event has recalled the reputation of these two book review sections. They exert a powerful influence over the book publishing and book selling trades. Both have been under attack by anti-Communist and traditionally American elements on the score that they have been partial towards pro-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communist and socialistic books and have ignored or given adverse reviews to books of a contrary tendency. Mrs. Irene Kuhn, in a celebrated piece in the *American Legion Magazine*, deployed a wealth of documentary evidence to support these charges. Senator Owen Brewster in 1951 vigorously attacked the editor of the *Times* book review for the same reasons.

One tart question is put: Would these journals give the same space and approval to an official biography of Dictator Franco of Spain? To ask is to answer.

●

When the Gods Are Silent, a novel by Mikhael Soloviev. Translated from the Russian by Harry G. Stevens. New York: Davis McKay, Inc. $3.95. Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

An ideology is a pattern of thought woven around a fixed idea. That idea may be an obsession, quite irrational, or it may be a conclusion arrived at by induction or deduction; since, however, it always originates in a subjective or emotional condition, it is at best a mixture of logic and illogic.

In any case, the ideology is of no social importance until it influences behavior; in its abstract form it simply furnishes logic-choppers with a block on which to work. Only when people act upon one another in the context of the ideology, when it finds expression in human relations, does it become a reality. When that happens, the explanations of the dialecticians no longer explain; only the artist, skilled in extracting some meaning from human experiences, is able to delineate the reality of the ideology. The poet, the playwright and the novelist are then the best teachers.

Everybody knows that Communism, as an ideology, stems from the writings of Karl Marx. But, as a practical matter, even the Communists must admit that it deviates from the original concept, while the simon-pure Socialists insist that what goes by the name of Communism in the U.S.S.R. is sheer heresy, forgetting that when human hands get hold of it any social theory suffers deterioration. The point is that such hair-splitting is futile; if we want to understand Communism we must look at it in operation, not as the theoreticians describe it, but as the novelist, the portrayer of human relations, sees it.

Mikhael Soloviev (a *nom de plume*) gives us a picture of Communism as a reality, not as a concept, in his captivating novel *When the Gods Are Silent.* Even if the publisher's release did not tell us that it is drawn from personal experiences, the minute details with which the vivid story is garnished gives evidence of its autobiographical character. The author (or rather, the hero, Mark Surov) was ten years old when the Bolshevik revolution swept over Russia, and within five years, having lost his father and six brothers in the fight to establish "heaven on earth", he enters the arena as mascot of the Budenny Cavalry Army.

Singled out for higher education, he is sent to the University of Moscow, whence he emerges a full-fledged cadet of the ruling class, a Party member. Even as a student he suspects that the ideology in practice is not quite up to its promise, for he observes the moral and intellectual deterioration of the students under the impact of its shibboleths, and begins to suspect that the essence of Communism is Stalin's drive for power. As a zealot and idealist, he excuses these deficiencies as the consequences of newness. But, during the next thirty years this seed of disillusionment ripens under the heat of his experiences, as a government functionary, and in the end he is compelled to draw the conclusion that Communism is a gigantic swindle.

It is a swift-moving story, replete with action and the interplay of human emotions, making the book hard to put down although, when you are finished with it, you realize that it is lacking in a formal plot. But, it needs none, for the implied plot is the psychological transformation of the hero from a confirmed Communist to a bitter opponent of Communism; emphasizing again the fallacy of the Socialist argument that inurement to a regime of that kind will do away with the human urge for freedom.

Entered as second class matter at the Post Office, Washington, D. C. Quotation up to a paragraph is permitted with credit to HUMAN EVENTS. For reproduction or more extensive quotation address requests to HUMAN EVENTS, 1835 K Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. Trial Subscription, three months for $3. Six months, $5.50. One year, $10. Two years, $18. First class mail, one year, $11.00; six months, $6.00. Domestic airmail (including APO and FPO) one year, $12.00; foreign (regular mail) one year, $11. Foreign airmail rates on request. Please remit in U.S.A. DOLLARS. Allow two weeks for new subscription or change of address to become effective.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED